

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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TAGS: PINS AEMR AO

SUBJECT: E&E: AMERICAN, BRITISH AND CANADIAN MISSIONARIES IN CENTRAL ANGOLA

CINCLANT AND CINCEUR FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: ALL MISSIONARIES CONTACTED BY CONGEN OFFICER IN CENTRAL ANGOLA WERE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THEIR SAFETY. CERTAIN MISSIONS ARE SENDING HOME DEPENDENTS AND MISSIONARIES, OTHERS HOPE THEIR RAPPORT WITH LOCAL BLACKS WILL CARRY THEM THROUGH THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE. THE PREFERRED EVACUATION ROUTE IS STILL VIA ROAD TO SOUTH WEST AFRICA BUT ALTERNATIVES WERE DISCUSSED. END SUMMARY

1. A CONGEN OFFICER AND A COLLEAGUE FROM THE BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL MET WITH AMERICAN, BRITISH AND CANADIAN MISSIONARIES LOCATED IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN ANGOLA. AS THE THREE NATIONALITIES ARE REPRESENTED IN MOST MISSIONS, ANY
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COMPREHENSIVE EVACUATION PLAN MUST TAKE ALL OF THEM INTO

ACCOUNT. THERE ARE PRESENTLY 47 AMERICAN, 6 BRITISH AND 19 CANADIAN CITIZENS IN THE MISSIONS, FOR A TOTAL OF 72.

2. ALL THE MISSIONARIES WHO MET WITH THE OFFICERS WERE VERY WORRIED ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION, BUT THE DEGREE OF CONCERN AND THE ACTIONS THEY HAVE TAKEN VARY WITH THE LOCALE AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT. SOME HAVE BEEN HARASSED AND THREATENED BY LIBERATION FORCES WHILE OTHERS FIND THEMSELVES WELL ACCEPTED. THE MOST AFFECTED MISSION IS AT LONGONJO (60 MILES EAST OF NOVA LISBOA), WHERE FNLA HAS FORCED THE PARTIAL CLOSING OF THE HOSPITAL AND WHERE THE NUMBER OF AMCITS HAD DROPPED FROM 21 IN FEBRUARY TO 6 NOW, WITH ONLY 5 TO REMAIN PERMANENTLY. AT THE OTHER EXTREME IS THE BIULA MISSION (70 MILES NORTH OF LUSO), WHERE MPLA IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE REGION AND WHERE THE MISSIONARIES HAVE BEEN GIVEN RUSSIAN MEDICINES TO ENABLE THE SMALL HOSPITAL TO REMAIN OPEN.

3. THE TYPICAL MISSION HAS NOT HAD DIRECT THREATS AGAINST IT, BUT HAS FOUND ITS WORK CURTAILED BY THE LACK OF SUPPLIES AND HAS HEARD INDIRECTLY THAT ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE GROUPS IS UNHAPPY WITH ITS PRESENCE OR WANTS TO USE ITS BUILDINGS AS BARRACKS. THESE MISSIONS ARE NOT YET SENDING MISSIONARIES HOME BUT MOST WOULD DO SO IF THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATION WORSENERD OR A GENERALIZED CONFLICT BROKE OUT. THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST MISSION IN NOVA LISBOA WAS HIT BY STRAY BULLETS AND A MORTAR DURING A RECENT MPLA-FNLA SHOOTOUT IN THE CITY AND THE AMCIT DIRECTOR WILL MOVE HIS HOME TO ANOTHER PART OF TOWN TO GET OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE.

4. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BUILA, ALL THE MISSIONS ARE LOCATED IN AREAS WHERE UNITA IS THE PREDOMINANT LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE MISSIONARIES HOPE THAT UNITA WILL EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO IMPOSE ORDER. THEY REPORT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE SMALL ARMED ELEMENTS OF THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS NEAR ALL THE MISSIONS, EXCEPT BUILA, AND IN VIEW OF UNITA'S PRESENT LOW MILITARY STRENGTH THEY FEEL IT IS NOT NOW CAPABLE OF PROTECTING ANY OF THE MISSIONS FROM HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE FROM ONE OF THE OTHER FORCES.

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5. WE TOLD THE MISSIONARIES THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT EITHER THE U.S., BRITISH OR PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENTS COULD EVACUATE THEM DURING A CONFLICT SITUATION AND ADVISED THEM TO CONSIDER DEPARTING AS SOON AS THEY PERCEIVED THAT THERE WAS NO LOCAL POWER CAPABLE OF OFFERING PROTECTION. IN THE EVENT THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A SHOOTING WAR BETWEEN THE GROUPS, TWO ALTERNATIVES WERE DISCUSSED. FIRST WOULD BE EVACUATION BY AIR-TAXI TO A SAFER LOCALE WHEN THE SITUATION IN THEIR AREA CALMED

TO THE POINT WHERE PLANES WOULD LAND. SECOND, THEY WERE TOLD THEY COULD CONTACT A BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMOND EXPLORATION COMPANY (COMPANHIA DE DIAMANTES DE ANGOLA) WHICH HAS DOZENS OF CAMPS AND 150 LAND ROVERS IN THE AREA. THIS COMPANY, HEADED BY A BRITISH CITIZEN RESIDENT IN NOVA LISBOA, HAS WELL DEVELOPED EVACUATION PLANS AND HAS CUT AIRSTRIPS OUT OF THE BUSH IN SEVERAL AREAS TO ACCOMMODATE STOL SAIRCRAFT. THE COMPANY IS WILLING TO TAKE THE MISSIONARIES OUT WITH ITS PERSONNEL, EITHER OVERLAND TO NAMIBIA OR VIA AIR TO WINDHOEK. HOWEVER, THE MISSIONARIES WERE ADVISED THAT EITHER OF THE ALTERNATIVES DEPENDS ON A TEMPORARY CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES OVER THE ENTIRE AREA THAT WOULD PERMIT THEM TO TRAVEL TO CENTRAL POINTS, OR FOR THE AIR TAXI TO LAND SAFELY. THEY WERE STRONGLY URGED NOT TO TRAVEL WHILE THERE WAS ACTIVE FIGHTING AND TO TRAVEL ONLY IN LARGE GROUPS.

6. THE DIAMOND COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE SAID IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT ONLY ESSENTIAL MISSIONARY PERSONNEL SHOULD REMAIN IN ANGOLA AND THAT MOST DEPENDENTS SHOULD LEAVE. WE DID NOTHING TO CONTRADICT HIS STATEMENT AND WE REITERATED THE NEED FOR THE MISSIONARIES TO MAKE A TIMELY DECISION BASED ON THEIR OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION. WE AGREED TO KEEP THEM INFORMED BY FREQUENT VISITS AND LETTERS OF OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION.
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